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AUTHOR Bravy, Sharon S.; Sedlacek, William E.
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ABSTRACT

Results of a telephone survey of 900 off-campus students and 500 faculty and staff at the University of Maryland, College Park showed that 5.7 percent of the students and 9.6 percent of the faculty-staff had at least one child under six. Additionally, 1.3 percent of the students and 4.6 percent of the faculty-staff indicated they would use a University sponsored day-care facility. Additional results were obtained on the amount respondents were willing to pay and other characteristics of operation of the facility. Because College Park is such a large institution, despite a low percentage interest there do appear to be enough individuals to begin a facility. Other points discussed in the study concern related studies done at other institutions, the inefficiency of conducting research in one area where the University does not keep records, and the importance of surveying those not currently connected with the university. (Author)

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STUDENT AND FACULTY-STAFF INTEREST IN A UNIVERSITY SPONSORED DAY-CARE FACILITY

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Research Report # 1-76

This study was partially funded by the Women's Commission, University of Maryland, College Park

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Summary

Results of a telephone survey of 900 off-campus students and 500 faculty-staff at the University of Maryland, College Park showed that 5.7% of the students and 9.6% of the faculty-staff had at least one child under six. Additionally, 1.3% of the students and 4.6% of the faculty-staff indicated they would use a University sponsored day care facility. Additional results were obtained on the amount respondents were willing to pay and other characteristics of operation of the facility. Because College Park is such a large institution, despite a low percentage interest there do appear to be enough individuals to begin a facility. Additional points discussed in the study concern other studies done at other institutions, the inefficiency of conducting research in an area where the University does not keep records, and the importance of surveying those not currently connected with the University.

The establishment of day care facilities for children of students and employees of an institution is an often stated program need by those concerned with women's issues on campus. Unfortunately, relatively little information is available on who would use a day care facility if one were established.

York University (1973) conducted a survey which showed that approximately 1.6% of the Atkinson College (Ontario) student body had preschool children and 1% expressed an interest in a college sponsored day care facility. Arterton (1971) found that less than 1% of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) employees had preschool children and less than half of the 1% were interested in placing their children in an MIT sponsored day care facility.

The purpose of the current study was to survey students and faculty staff members of the University of Maryland, College Park to determine their interest in a University sponsored day care facility.

Procedure

A telephone survey (See Appendix A) was conducted of a computer drawn random sample of 900 students (graduate and undergraduate; full and part-time) and 500 faculty-staff members. The student population was defined as those who had never applied for housing and had an off-campus address. Undergraduate students were given training in making the telephone surveys and were supervised by a graduate research assistant from the Counseling Center.

Results

Of the 900 students contacted, 51 (5.7%) had at least one child under six and 12 (1.3%) reported they would use a University sponsored day care center. Of the 500 faculty-staff contacted, 48 (9.6%) had at

least one child under six and 23 (4.6%) indicated they would use a University sponsored day care center.

If we project these percentages to the total number of people in the population of students and faculty-staff who have at least one chil under six, and who would be interested, we achieve the following: We are 95% confident that the true number of students with children under six is between 1030 and 2130 (3.7% to 7.6%), and that those who say they would use a University sponsored day care center range between 210 and 540 (.7% and 1.9%). Projections are based on data furnished by the Data Research Center and the Office of Resident Life.

For faculty-staff we are 95% confident that the true number with at least one child under six is between 320 and 570 (6.9% to 12.3%), and those who say they would use the day care facility would range between 120 and 300 (2.6% and 6.5%)

In general, the students would use the center for half-days (morn ings or afternoons, several days a week), while the faculty and staff members would require it to be open between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., with one staff member needed from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

All of the staff members would be willing to pay for this service nine of them would pay $1.00 per hour maximum; six would be willing tc pay $1.50 per hour; five would give $2.00 per hour, and two said that they would pay whatever was necessary to support the center. Of the 12 students responding, 7 would not be willing to pay to have their children cared for, four would contribute up to $1.00 per hour per child, and one would give up to $2.00 per hour.

Among the 12 students interested in using the center, eight said

that they would not be willing to contribute any hours on a cooperative basis to the center. Of the remaining students, two indicated that they would give five hours, one would contribute up to eight hours and one would volunteer 10 hours. Most of the faculty-staff respondents indicated a willingness to contribute time to the center. Eight of these individuals said they would contribute five hours, six would volunteer up to three hours, and four said they would contribute some hours, but with the number of hours depending on the cost of care for their children.

Seven of the 12 students said they would use the center even if it were not possible to provide professional staff members; three students would not use the center under these circumstances, while two would use the center if there were no charge for care. Twenty-one of the 23 faculty-staff members would use the center even if professional care were not available, and two would not.

Three of the faculty-staff members and five of the students said that they would need transportation to the center for their children if the center were located off the University campus. All but one of the student respondents and all of the faculty-staff members indicated that they would like to be consulted regularly on policy related to center services.

In response to questions 13, all those surveyed reported that the children had no special medical, emotional, or other needs for which they would require unusual care.

Discussion

Perhaps the most obvious conclusion from the study is that the percentages of students or faculty-staff with preschool children is

low and consequently the percentage of those interested in the facility is lower still. The figures from the present survey agree fairly well with the York University (1973) study and the MIT study (Arterton, 1971) who found 1% or less of students or faculty-staff who were actually interested in a school sponsored day care facility. The MIT study provides some information on how many of those who expressed interest actually enrolled their children in the day care facility once it was started. Less than one-third of those who said they would enroll a child actually did so, although others who did not initially express an interest did enroll a child, and their center began with about 50% of the number who had expressed interest at the time of the survey. However, after a period of about six months the number of parents seeking to enroll one or more children more than doubled. No information was provided in the York study on the implementation of a day care center

There is further information gathered from other studies done at the University of Maryland, College Park that should be noted. In a study of working women on campus currently being conducted by the Counseling Center, and partially funded by the Women's Commission of the University, some preliminary results on day care show the following: About 17% of the classified staff, 8% of the professional staff and 6% of the students have at least one child under six. Additionally, 9% of the classified staff, 6% of the professional staff, and 2% of the students said they would use a University sponsored day care center. Again, these figures are quite close to others reported even though the population is different: working women on campus.

Results of the University Student Census, which is administered each year by the Counseling Center to incoming freshmen, showed that freshmen tended to agree that the "University should sponsor a day care center for pre-school children." In 1971 48% agreed and 15% disagreed; in 1972 55% agreed and 10% disagreed; and in 1975 43% agreed and 9% disagreed. The balance of the responses were neutral.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As noted earlier, there is not a high percentage of interest in day care from members of the University community. However, since College Park is such a large campus, the numbers of people interested or likely to enroll children seem sufficient to warrant it. The findings raise a number of methodological points about conducting future day care research.

First, if we survey students and faculty-staff, we are probably asking the wrong people. In order to meet the obligations of students or employees, those already on campus have made some kind of arrangements for their children or they wouldn't be able to come to the campus. Appendix B contains a list of day care centers currently used by respondents in the survey. One really needs to survey those who cannot enroll in school or work for the University unless they have a day care facility. Obviously most of these people would have no direct connection with the University at present. Arterton (1971) reinforces this point by stating that the actual need for day care will only be known when a center is established and available.

Another point worth noting is that since there is such a small percentage of students and employees interested in day care, the

effort and cost of surveying this group is extraordinarily high. In fact, it is suggested that the cost per response is so high that unless the University obtains better information on numbers and ages of children and regularly updates it, it is not worth doing further surveys of the type done here. A related point is made to the University Women's Commission or any others interested in campus issue concerning women. Poor record keeping by the institution can hinder a program more rapidly than any other variable. Data that could be gathered centrally and easily should be specified by the Commission as part of its program. Many administrators are either unaware of what information might be useful or reluctant to gather anything that might be controversial. Here is a clear task and charge for the Women's Commission or other groups on campus.

References

Arterton, J.B. Research and demonstration program of day care services for MIT employees, Interim Report, 1971. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1971.

York University report on the Atkinson College child care planning survey. York University, Downview, Ontario, Canada, Institute for Behavioral Research, 1973.

APPENDIX A

DAY CARE SURVEY

HELLO. MY NAME IS_____AND I AM CALLING FROM THE COUNSELING CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND. WE ARE DOING A SURVEY TO GATHER INFORMATION REGARDING THE NEED FOR AND INTEREST IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED DAY CARE CENTER. AS A PART OF THAT SURVEY I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.

1) FIRST OF ALL, DO YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 6? YES____ NO____
If the answer is NO, say: THE REST OF THE QUESTIONS ARE BEING ASKED ONLY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH CHILDREN IN THAT AGE CATEGORY. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.
If the answer is YES ask the following question:

2) ARE YOU PRESENTLY USING A DAY CARE CENTER? YES____ NO____
If the answer is YES ask the following question:

3) WOULD YOU PLEASE GIVE ME THE NAME AND EXACT ADDRESS OF THAT CENTER?

If the answer is NO ask the following question:
4) WOULD YOU USE A UNIVERSITY SPONSORED DAY CARE CENTER? YES____NO____

If the answer is NO say: THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.

If the answer is YES continue with the rest of the questions:

5) HOW MANY OF YOUR CHILDREN WOULD USE THE CENTER AND WHAT ARE THEIR AGES?

6) LIST PRECISELY THE TIMES (INCLUDING DAY AND EVENING HOURS) DURING WHICH YOU WOULD PRESENTLY USE THE CENTER'S SERVICES.

7) WHAT IS THE MAXIMUM HOURLY RATE YOU WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CENTER'S SUPPORT?

8) APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY HOURS PER WEEK WOULD YOU BE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE, ON A COOPERATIVE BASIS, TOWARDS HELPING AGENCY SERVICES?

9) WOULD YOU BE PREPARED TO SUPPLY MEALS FOR YOUR CHILD OR CHILDREN WHILE THEY ARE USING THE CENTER? YES____ NO____

10) SHOULD THE CENTER BE UNABLE TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBERS, WOULD YOU STILL USE THE CENTER? YES____ NO____

11) IF THE CENTER WERE LOCATED OFF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK CAMPUS, WOULD YOU NEED TRANSPORTATION TO GET YOUR CHILD THERE? YES____ NO____

12) WOULD YOU WISH TO BE CONSULTED REGULARLY ON POLICY RELATED TO CENTER SERVICES? YES____ NO____

13) PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY SPECIAL MEDICAL, EMOTIONAL, OR OTHER NEEDS WHICH YOUR CHILD HAS FOR WHICH SHE/HE WOULD NEED UNUSUAL CARE.

APPENDIX B

Day care centers presently being used by respondents in survey

Beltsville YWCA Nursery School, Beltsville, Maryland

Lanham Montessori School, 6715 Cipriano Road, Lanham, Maryland

Madison Elementary School, Falls Church, Virginia

Riverdale Baptist Church, Riverdale, Maryland

Silver Spring Child Care Center, 9226 Colesville Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

Willowbrook Day Nursery, 8151 15th Avenue, Langley Park, Maryland